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❖ BACKUS ❖ MEMORIAL ❖

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IN THE YEAR 1885

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BACKUS MEMORIAL.

“They who take no pride in the worthy achievements of remote ancestors, will never achieve anything worthy to be remembered with pride by remote descendants.”—*Macaulay*.
Am. J.

As a people become intelligent and refined, they set a higher value on the knowledge of their ancestors, and will not only raise the marble monument to their memory, but keep an exact history of them. It is not sufficient to know their names. We wish to know their traits of character, their worthy deeds and their influence on society; that we, and those who come after us, may be benefited by their example.

Bancroft states in his history, “The early Puritans are the parents of one-third of the white inhabitants of the United States, and their example is spreading throughout the civilized world.”

Macaulay, in his Essays, remarks, that “their peculiarities and eccentricities were all on the surface. In their early history, they were the subjects of jest and ridicule by the press and the drama, both of which were noted at that time for their licentious and reckless course; while the Puritans opposed amusements and mirthfulness, perhaps with the same intolerant spirit as that of which they complained.” But time has softened and subdued the sternness and severity of ancient creeds and factions, and, let us hope, the eccentricities also.

Stephen Backus settled with his family in Norwich in 1660, and was the first Englishman who died in Norwich. *brother* Lieutenant William² Backus was one of the original proprietors of Norwich; he married Elizabeth Pratt, and had seven children. Joseph, the

fourth son, was a magistrate in Norwich, and married Elizabeth Huntington April 9, 1690. Their son, Samuel Backus, born 1693, married Elizabeth Tracy; he died 1740, she 1769. They had eleven children, and lived quietly on their farm.

Rev. Isaac Backus, their fourth son, was born 1724; was married, and father of nine children. He was a Congregationalist, but changed his views of baptism, and was independent for a time; but finally fully accepted the Baptist doctrine, and was, for half a century, pastor of the same church in Middleboro, Massachusetts. His *New England History* is a valuable ecclesiastical work. He was trustee of Rhode Island College for thirty years; Dr. Manning of Princeton, N. J., being President. Mr. Backus was devoted to the interests of civil and religious liberty for many years. He was sent in 1774 to petition Congress, in behalf of the provinces, for a severance of "Church and State," urging that they should be separate governments, but the proposition was not received with favor by the new Continental Congress. However, a note to Mr. Backus promised to give the subject consideration, and he left Philadelphia quite hopeful. But many years intervened before the first article in the amendments conferred religious liberty. He realized that, "to many minds, the "establishment" was as a tower of strength, and disseverance was dependence and insecurity. To drift away from the throne and royalty, was to relinquish rank and preferment. Independence was an odious term, until its blessings were understood and appreciated; and he who cast the decisive vote for American Independence, died under censure of his friends.

He should have been named the author of the first article, etc., conferring "free speech and a free press," with the hope that these liberties will never require another amendment. He honored the "Father of his country," as far as was in his power; he presented him with his history, subscribing himself in an accompanying letter, as was customary then, "your humble servant."

Professor Hovey, President of Newton Theological Institute and of the "Backus Historical Society," states in his valuable memoirs, that "Mr. Backus was a faithful student, and examined with great care works in his own language on systematic theology. His good sense was conspicuous in the estimate which he formed of different writers, and the remarks which he made on their chief productions. Besides, he was himself a prolific author; he per-

formed a great amount of labor with the pen. This was his constant companion at home and abroad. He was a particular admirer of Jonathan Edwards, and speaks of him as one of the best men in our land."

Elizabeth, the sister of Rev. Isaac Backus, married Hon. Jabez Huntington, and their eldest son was Brigadier General Jedediah Huntington, of Revolutionary fame. Among the guests at his home in Norwich, were Washington, Lafayette and Rochambeau.

Elijah, son of Samuel, was a prominent man, member of the Colonial Legislature; he married Lucy Griswold. Their second son, Elijah, graduated at Yale in 1777, became a lawyer; married Lucy Hubbard Tracy in 1784. His son Thomas, born in Norwich, 1785, was also a graduate of Yale, a lawyer and a poet; his sons were Elijah and William, attorneys at law, Columbus, Ohio, and Hon. Abner Backus, residing in Toledo at this time.

Simon Backus, son of Rev. Isaac, was devoted to quiet farming, and married Hannah Alden, a lineal descendant of John Alden of the Mayflower.

The oldest son was Andrew Backus; he married Bathsheba King of Rayham, Massachusetts, and lived to nearly ninety years of age. Their children are, Emily, Orrin and Lafayette. Emily married Joseph V. McElvaine; has one daughter. Orrin has one son, William, and he a son William; they reside in Riverside, California. Lafayette, a daughter and two sons; Laura, Herbert and George.

Andrew Backus's sister, Eunice, married Judge Stevens, of Athol, Massachusetts. They left three children, Charles, of San Francisco; Harriet married Dr. George Colony, of Fitchburg, Massachusetts; Anna is unmarried. Joseph Backus Colony, eldest son of Dr. Colony. The eldest daughter is Mrs. Melvin O. Adams, of Boston.

Andrew's brother, J. Alden Backus, inherited the ancient homestead, and died in 1883, nearly eighty years of age. His adopted son, Isaac Perkins, succeeds him.

Hon. Morgan Nelson, of Wheeling, West Virginia, grandson of Rev. Isaac Backus, died about 1860. Attorney at law during a long life, at one time Mayor, and for many years vestryman in the First Episcopal Church. His brother, Rev. Samuel B. Nelson, died previously. Lieutenant S. Nelson Holmes was a graduate of

West Point, deceased in 1884. Every generation had its representative men, worthy examples.

¹⁸²⁵ John C. Backus, D.D., of Baltimore, died in 1884, after a long and useful life. He possessed more than ordinary ability, united with culture and personal attractiveness. And the same of J. Trumbull Backus, D.D., one of the compilers of the "Hymnal."

Rev. Samuel Backus, Congregational, of Brooklyn, lived also a long and useful life. His son Samuel married a daughter of Ex-Governor Clarke, of New York, and is an architect. Harriet is devoted to works of benevolence, and married Stephen C. Griggs, M.D.; they reside in Brooklyn.

Dr. Samuel Backus Lyon, of Government Hospital for Insane at Washington, is another link in this chain of kindred.

Professor Backus, of Packer Institute, Brooklyn, belongs to another branch.

There are many others whose names are not here, whose friendship and genial society we remember with affection. Compilation of the various records would be voluminous. But to sum up the inferences deduced from various sources, the writer affirms that morality, religion and rectitude were characteristic without a reprobate in the schedule.

Homer said of the people of his time, "Most sons are inferior to their fathers;" but this can not be said of the eminent divines and others recently passed to the other side. If the same law of analogy held good, the present generation with better advantages might surpass previous ones, leaving better "footprints on the sands of time;" but *better* is simply impossible. The average ratio of inherited longevity to the present time, is three to four score years.

In the retrospect of the centuries since the first planter settled at Norwich, what a numerous family has borne his lineament and lineage! what a colony! Homogeneous and loyal to his name and the country of his adoption, the genealogical tree he planted in kindly soil was firm and enduring, while the same locality evolved a Benedict Arnold, these branches developed such as aided in the founding of the new Republic, enriched and adorned by the engrafting from other growths, as the Winslow and Alden tendrils from Plymouth Rock; where, from the same source, sprang the maternal parent of our poet laureate, who wrote of his far-off

ancestor, John Alden, "bred as a scholar." Himself, "like one of those far stars that come in sight once in a century." In his words :

All that inhabit this great earth,
 Whatever be their rank or worth,
 Are kindred and allied by birth ;
 And made of the same clay.—*Longfellow.*

Andrew Backus inherited an appreciation of art and literature, and was accustomed to note the almost constant practice of the penman, being reared in his youth in the home of his grandsire, Rev. Isaac Backus, who hoped to see his grandson a "minister." But extreme diffidence and a practical turn of mind led the latter to decide upon handicraft rather than study.

His very remote grandfather, John Alden, was a poet and a scholar, "youngest of all who came in the Mayflower." Andrew's mother, Hannah Alden, was refined and comely, leaving many little legends and episodes with her family, which he was fond of narrating, as, also his life, while a soldier in 1812; he probably acquired then a desire to travel. Columbus seemed his destination. He came first and erected a dwelling on the "mound," as an attractive spot, which, in that day, had the charm of scenery and association.

The one who was to share his home had existed all her life in her father's cheerful abode, with its expansive hillsides and natural pine groves in the background. The house completed, he went back to Massachusetts, married and returned in his own conveyance, being over two months *en route*. Their future life was mingled good and ill. His greatest delight was in the cultivation of flowers, which blossomed as if by magic under his touch; the choicest roses and leaflets were always in bloom; and his vines and their clusters yielded in such profusion, as to suggest an ancient vintage of an unlineal ancestor. Before he reached his fourscore years, his memory almost failed him. But his responsive vines, fig trees and fragrant flowers were his companions to the last.

ANCIENT RUINS IN OHIO.

Extracts from the diary of Mr. Andrew Backus, copied verbatim :
 November 10, 1816. Steubenville, the first town he visited in Ohio, is finely situated on the right bank of the Ohio, in a rich and

fertile country. It contains two houses of worship, academy, court-house and jail, two banks, thirty stores and a market-house, three hundred and fifty dwelling houses.

November 11. Twelve miles from Wheeling, Va., our boat stopped at the mouth of Grave Creek, that we might visit the remains of antiquity. One mile from the river we came to a large mound, or grave as it is called, in the edge of the woods. From its summit we had a fine view of the country; it is on a level plain, having neither ditch nor rising ground near; nor can it be discovered from whence the earth of which it is formed was taken. Its perpendicular elevation is about seventy-five feet, one hundred and eighty yards around its base and forty yards around its flat top. It appears to be a regular circle, its top sunken to the depth of four feet, forming a basin of that depth. Its top and sides are covered with trees of the same size and appearance as the rest of the forest. On its summit is a white oak, three feet in diameter. The trees near are carved full of letters and many whole names, and initials of names, with the dates, by those who visited this place. We left Grave Creek about ten o'clock, made thirty-five miles to-day, stopping for the night at Charles Wells'.

November 12. Wind ahead to-day, made but twenty miles; the flats on the river are rich and fertile.

November 13, P. M. Made twenty-eight miles, which brought us to the mouth of the Muskingum. We passed a number of fine farms, and the land is of the first quality. Wind was still ahead and we stopped three or four hours, and never saw as many squirrels, thirty or forty in one spot, and plenty of turkeys.

November 14. We arrived at Marietta early in the morning, and left the boat and men. Coming by land we put up at Colonel Barker's. Marietta is situated on a very high bluff, notwithstanding which it is almost annually overflowed, to the depth of eight or ten feet, especially the lower part of town. It contains a large Presbyterian meeting-house, a court-house, bank and jail, one hundred and twenty houses, various stores. The inhabitants are principally New Englanders.

About one mile up the Muskingum I visited some ancient fortifications, and among them is a large fort which contains forty acres, encompassed by a wall of earth from eight to ten feet high. On each side are three openings, at equal distances, resembling twelve

gateways, which, in my opinion, must have been a town, with three parallel streets north and south and three east and west. When or by whom it was built is, and probably will remain, a mystery.

A little south of this, in the centre of the burying ground, is a mound of earth thirty feet high; it is surrounded with a ditch four feet deep and a wall four feet high, through which is an opening twenty feet wide toward the fort.

November 15. I traveled up the Muskingum to Waterford; here I left the river and reached Stevens' about dark. The land on the Muskingum was fair, the timber is principally oak.

November 16. I reached the salt works; for twenty-one miles the country is but thinly settled, and the most part has been a high ridge and thin soil.

November 17. I reached Zanesville about 12 o'clock, eleven miles the country much the same as yesterday, except more settled. It is said to be quite good for wheat. It contains a court-house and meeting-house, three glass factories, two hundred and fifty-one houses and stores, two banks. There are two bridges across the river, adjoining the town, within one-half mile of each other, connecting this town with Putnam. The lower bridge is an elegant substantial one, built on hewn stone piers by the citizens of Putnam, who are principally New Englanders.

Putnam is on the west bank of the Muskingum, opposite Zanesville, and contains fifty to seventy-five stores and houses.

November 18, 19 and 20. We stayed in Zanesville, and it rained most of the time, which made a heavy freshet in the river.

November 21. The rain ceased and we left Zanesville and proceeded to Newark. The first part of the way was hilly and unproductive, latter part more fertile. The town has seventy houses, eight stores and public buildings as usual.

November 23. Came to Granville.

November 24. Start for Columbus. The roads are very bad to-day, made but fifteen miles and put up at Pugh's, near "big walnut." Mr. Pugh took his horse and crossed the creek with us.

November 25. Reached Columbus at noon.

The country from Granville is level, and a great part of the way very wet. The timber is beech, ash, elm, sugar maple, etc. The soil is rich, and when the timber is cleared off will be much dryer.

The sycamore grows in great abundance on the Ohio, and on the

numerous rivers and creeks throughout the State. Its majestic growth and towering height fill the beholder with astonishment. They grow from ten to fifteen feet in diameter, and there is one in Scioto County into whose hollow several men rode on horseback on June 6, 1808.

November, 1816. Columbus is a flourishing town, and capital of the State of Ohio. It is situated on the east bank of the Scioto River in the center of Franklin County. It stands on a beautiful site of rising ground just below the mouth of Whetstone Creek, and was laid out in 1812. It now contains a handsome state-house, seventy-five by fifty feet upon the ground, a building for public offices, a bank, penitentiary, market-house, seven stores, two hundred houses and thirteen hundred inhabitants. Has one weekly paper, the *Columbus Gazette*.

He wrote several years later—"Jonathan Reed, who bought a farm below town, has moved back to Taunton, having had continued sickness in his family."

March 16. Went in company with Mr. Goodrich and others to visit the stupendous remains of antiquity about two miles south-west of Newark. The large circular fort is apparently as regular a circle as could be formed; it has but one opening or gateway, and that is about six or eight rods wide, guarded by a straight wall on both sides four rods long. The walls of the fort are from twenty to twenty-eight feet high, and those of the gate are thirty feet high. On the summit there is a good path all the way around, where, probably, hundreds of people have traveled to view it.

We judged that it was nearly a mile around, were informed that it has been surveyed, and contains sixty or seventy acres within the walls.

A short distance beyond there is a square fort, the walls being only four or five feet high, and a number of small mounds near. There are several walks, some of them two or three miles in length. This country has, undoubtedly, been thickly peopled by a race far more industrious and enterprising than the present race of Indians. It must have been, however, at some very distant period, as the trees on the walls and within them are of the same size and appearance as the rest of the forest.



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